

Pacifying/Enlivening the Heart

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The term *swd3-jb* in AE epistolography has a parallel, albeit with a different meaning, in the Arabic term *ihyā' al qulūb*. I recently came across the expression in the account written by Rifa'a al Tahtawi of the time he spent as the leader of a delegation to the Collège de France (1826 – 1831) under the sponsorship of Muhammad Ali to study European culture¹. Rifa'a writes that they regularly received communications from the Pasha:

Since our departure from Egypt it had become his habit to send us a firmān every couple of months, urging us to the study of the arts and sciences. Some of these were of the type called “ihyā' al qulūb” by the Ottomans.²

Whereas the AE term means something like “pacifying the heart” and was intended to allay fears, the Arabic term means “enlivening the hearts” and was clearly intended to produce quite a different effect. A copy of one of these “enlivening” messages is included by Rifa'a, castigating him and his colleagues for not working hard enough and for actually falling behind their fellow students at home in Egypt.

¹ *Takhlīṣ al ibrīz fi talhīṣ al barīz* (Refining the gold in summarizing Paris) section 4 §4. The copy I have was published in 1905. The whole text has been translated into German and amply furnished with notes by K. Stowasser *Ein Muslim entdeckt Europa* (Munich, 1988)

² I was unable to find this term in the entry “Farmān” in the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (Leiden, 1965)